

Safe Roadways Committee

Report to the City Council

January 2004

Safe Roadways Committee - Report to the City Council

The Safe Roadways Committee was established and directed by the City Council of Takoma Park to:

- 1) Identify the obstinate traffic problems that plague the City.
- 2) Recommend potential solutions, and
- 3) Prepare a report to the City Council.

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Simply put, the Committee accepted that:

There is no silver bullet in sight that will make the pass through traffic that plagues the City go away.

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HOWEVER, The Committee finds:

That many recommendations of past studies intended to mitigate the destructive effects of excessive traffic have not been implemented by the City;

That past studies have not addressed such quality of life issues as pedestrian safety, noise, vibration and pollution; and

That the City must greatly improve on the management of studies and the implementation of recommendations intended to mitigate the effects of pass through traffic.

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Discussion

Takoma Park has had problems with pass through traffic for a very long time. They grow worse as the volume of traffic continues to increase on major roads within and surrounding the City. The traffic congestion has a significant negative effect on the health, safety and welfare of residents and other road users, as well as causing damage to adjoining property. City roads were not designed to carry such large volumes of traffic. As a result, the quality of life in the city is increasingly degraded.

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Since this problem has been known and studied many times in the past, the Committee decided first of all, to recover what could be learned from previous studies.

Five traffic studies conducted by and for the City during the past 25 years were examined in detail.

The 1993 City of Takoma Park Transportation Plan: Phase I - Traffic Management Plan (adopted June 14, 1993) was also reviewed.

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The following five studies were reviewed in detail

Takoma Transportation Study (September 2002-03)

Community Center Traffic Signal and Crosswalk Study (November 2002)

MD 650/MD 410 Corridor Residential Traffic Mgmt Study (February 1993)

Takoma Park Traffic Impact Study (September 1987)

Takoma Park Traffic Engineering Study (May 1979)

The 1993 City of Takoma Park Transportation Plan: Phase I - Traffic Management Plan (adopted June 14, 1993) was also consulted.

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From this effort, the Committee learned
what traffic issues have been studied,
what recommendations have been made, and
what issues have not been previously addressed.

Not surprisingly, the reviewed studies were all concerned, one way or another, with the excessive traffic volume on residential streets and the impact of development in neighboring jurisdictions on the traffic volumes in the City.

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Surprisingly however:

The reviewed studies did not treat:

traffic enforcement issues (e.g. speeding, running lights) the excessive queuing times resulting from large traffic volumes at intersections,

nor the noise, vibration, and pollution generated by this traffic.

In other words, they did not address major pedestrian and vehicular safety and quality of life issues.

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Additionally and equally significantly,

many of the recommended solutions to specific traffic problems have never been implemented.

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Solutions

The Committee feels that it is important to put forward "solutions" or recommendations that when adopted, will benefit the City almost immediately.

These fall into two categories:

- 1. Implement physical modifications to roads at intersections, and
- 2. Implement changes in the way the City manages studies and traffic issues.

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Physical modifications at intersections.

Recommendation for physical ('traffic calming") modifications at intersections have been made repeatedly over the years. They are intended to improve safety for all modes of transportation by reducing vehicle speeds and/or diverting traffic and providing safer pedestrian crossings.

These are

roundabouts, pedestrian islands and medians, and "bulbouts".

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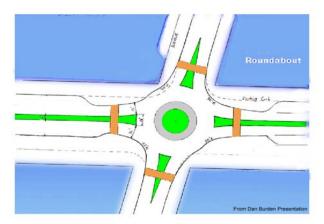
Roundabouts are circular barriers in the middle of intersections that substitute for traffic signals or all-way stop signs.

Roundabouts decrease vehicle speed while increasing the flow. They reduce conflicts between vehicles, and vehicles and pedestrians. Takoma Junction, the intersection of Piney Branch and Philadelphia Avenue, and Philadelphia Avenue and Maple Avenue are suggested locations for the trial installation of roundabouts.

"Bulbouts" are curb extensions that reduce curb-to-curb roadway travel lane widths. The narrower road lane enables pedestrians to cross a wide street in a much shorter time, decreasing the chances of pedestrian-vehicle conflicts. Potential locations to implement this design are at the intersections of Carroll and Laurel Avenues, and Carroll and Westmoreland.

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Pedestrian islands or refuges are raised structures placed between two travel lanes, usually at a pedestrian crosswalk. They slow vehicles within the travel lane and provide a safe area for pedestrians, allowing them to cross the road one half at a time. Locations for installation include: Carroll Avenue at the unsignaled crosswalk in front of Takoma Tower; Carroll, Columbia, and Park Avenues; Flower and Domer Avenues; and Philadelphia Avenue across from the library/municipal center access.

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Recommended changes in the way the City manages studies and traffic issues.

Establish guidelines and minimum "standard" requirements for future studies, including quantitative quality of life indicators.

Establish an effective decision-making processes about which recommendations in a study to implement and the schedule for implementation; and

Actively manage and review the progress of implementing recommendations.

Continued

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Work to correct the inappropriate designation of residential streets <u>as arterial roads</u> on various State and County plans.

Cause the establishment of an interagency, crossjurisdictional traffic safety related, quality of life working group to remedy problems caused by having the control over City streets divided among several agencies.

<u>Spearhead</u> in the State Legislature appropriate legislation allowing the implementation of automated enforcement of speed limits at designated locations.

And to reduce cut-through traffic, designate as "one-way" those streets that call for only local residential traffic.

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In summary the Committee recommends that:

The City implement a trial set of the three traffic calming construction recommendations; and

Adopt and immediately implement the above described management recommendations (some of which have been identified as early as 1993).

Additionally, once the street configuration changes are evaluated, the City should then adopt a <u>schedule</u> for applying these measures at the appropriate intersections in the City.

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Time present and time past

Are both perhaps present in time future

And time future contained in time past.

T.S. EliOt, "Burnt Norton"

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